

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 985

By Henry

A RESOLUTION to honor and congratulate the Congregation of Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia, students, alumnae, faculty, staff, and administration upon the 150th anniversary of St. Cecilia Academy.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly are honored to recognize those educational institutions that are celebrating momentous occasions in their illustrious histories; and

WHEREAS, St. Cecilia Academy, which is celebrating the 150th anniversary of its founding, is one such academic institution wholly deserving of the recognition of this Body; and

WHEREAS, St. Cecilia Academy, a Catholic all-girls college preparatory school located in Nashville, Tennessee, began in 1860 as a dream of Nashville's second Catholic bishop, the Right Reverend James Whelan; and

WHEREAS, the bishop, who was a member of the Dominican Order of Preachers, wanted sisters to conduct an academy for the higher education of girls and young ladies, guided by deep religious instruction with an emphasis on music and the fine arts; and

WHEREAS, after petitioning the sisters at St. Mary's in Somerset, Ohio, the four founding sisters of the Congregation of Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia, Mother Frances Walsh, Sister Columba Dittoe, Sister Lucy Harper, and Sister Philomena McDonough, arrived in Nashville in mid-August of 1860 after a long journey by stagecoach, steamboat, and train; and

WHEREAS, building a new educational institution and convent (the Motherhouse) located on one of the highest hills in Nashville and just a stone's throw away from the State Capitol building, the original four sisters immediately began the considerable task of establishing the new girl's academy; and

WHEREAS, the new academy was named after the third century martyr, St. Cecilia, patroness of music, and significantly, it was on the feast of St. Cecilia in the year 1206 that St. Dominic created his first establishment of the Order of Preachers, giving nine women religious the white woolen tunic and black mantle of the Order; and

WHEREAS, meeting every challenge with faith, the four pioneers gracefully mixed the life of the religious with that of an educator, teaching the regular curriculum along with art and music at St. Cecilia Academy, while also acting as prefects for the boarding students, doing the housework, and managing the business affairs of the community; and

WHEREAS, overcoming many obstacles throughout the course of their early history, including the occupation of Nashville by Union forces during the War Between the States, the Battle of Nashville, and the tremendous poverty and devastation the city faced during Reconstruction, all mitigated by the powerful presence of Divine Providence, the apostolate continued to grow and flourish in faith and grace; and

WHEREAS, with the community growing in continued blessings, the Dominican sisters purchased one of the most attractive localities and properties in Nashville in 1923; located on Harding Road, the ninety-two acre tract would figure prominently in the Congregation's future; and

WHEREAS, through many years of hard work and determination, the sisters established The Dominican Campus on the Harding Road property, and in 1957 St. Cecilia Academy was moved from the Motherhouse to its present location as the centerpiece of the beautiful campus; and

WHEREAS, providing Catholic education to thousands of young women and enlightening their minds and inspiring their hearts with knowledge and love of the Truth, the Congregation of Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia have a long, prominent, and distinguished relationship with the State of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, since 1860, St. Cecilia Academy has been a place where young ladies flourish and develop into the women God intends them to be; and

WHEREAS, founded on the absolute belief in the dignity of each individual made in the image and likeness of God, St. Cecilia Academy has developed a program that challenges

young girls academically, while nurturing them spiritually and guiding them as they grow into confident, articulate women of faith; and

WHEREAS, excelling in its mission to prepare young women to meet the challenges of life and help them contribute in a positive manner to society, St. Cecilia Academy has served as a bastion of hope, integrity, faith, and truth in the Nashville community for 150 years, extending to students of all faiths the principles of Christian life in the Roman Catholic tradition; and

WHEREAS, woven into the fabric of daily life at St. Cecilia Academy are the precepts of Dominican spirituality, centered on the four pillars of Christian life: prayer, study, community, and service, creating a unique bond and tradition for all St. Cecilia Academy students, influencing and inspiring them throughout their lives; and

WHEREAS, rooted in a deep and abiding faith in God, every aspect of St. Cecilia Academy finds its origin in reliance upon divine grace and holiness, which serve as the impetus behind the programs and activities designed to guide students towards true charity for God and others; and

WHEREAS, inspired by the school motto, *Veritatem Dare Summa Caritas* ("To give Truth is the greatest Charity"), the students of St. Cecilia Academy recognize the reflection of Dominican charism at the heart of their community, drawing on these words for guidance and encouragement throughout their daily endeavors; and

WHEREAS, the school coat of arms uniquely illustrates the school's deep heritage. Central to the design is a harp, representing St. Cecilia, the patron saint of music, set against a red background, symbolizing St. Cecilia's martyrdom, and a black and white *fleur-de-lis* cross set above the harp, symbolic of the Dominican order; and

WHEREAS, rich in tradition, St. Cecilia Academy serves as a generational bond of faith within the entire St. Cecilia community, from alumnae to current students; all who have experienced the indelible legacy of St. Cecilia Academy will testify to the lasting and unique bond of sisterhood emanating from this distinguished and historic academic institution; and

WHEREAS, as St. Cecilia Academy moves forward into the twenty-first century, the entire St. Cecilia community also reflects back over the long and illustrious history of the school, beholding its heritage of truth, academic excellence, and deep abiding faith; and

WHEREAS, since the humble beginnings of St. Cecilia Academy, the Congregation of Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia, following the guidance of the Lord, have faithfully striven to carry out their educational mission, preparing young women for a complex world, and offering them answers that will serve them in time and in eternity; and

WHEREAS, St. Cecilia Academy has served as one of the great academic institutions in our State and Nation, and the Congregation of Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia, students, alumnae, faculty, staff, and administration of this exceptional and historic academy should be appropriately honored for ensuring that Tennessee's students and future leaders are prepared to meet the many challenges of society with faith, hope, charity, and fortitude; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor and congratulate the Congregation of Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia, students, alumnae, faculty, staff, and administration of St. Cecilia Academy upon the school's 150th anniversary, extending our gratitude for the significant impact St. Cecilia Academy continues to have on the citizens of Tennessee, and wishing the entire St. Cecilia community every success in the future.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.